

Gombe's Impact Echoes Around The World

Jane Goodall first arrived in Tanzania over 65 years ago on July 14, 1960 to study the wild chimpanzees of Gombe National Park. Jane's subsequent findings challenged scientific norms of the time, demonstrating that chimpanzees have personalities, complex minds, emotions, and above all, that there is not a sharp line dividing us from them; we are a part of and not separated from the rest of the animal kingdom.

Dr. Goodall's observations have profoundly influenced the fields of primatology, animal behavior, human evolution, health, and psychology. Today, Gombe remains a living laboratory — home to the longest-running wild chimpanzee study in the world. This groundbreaking scientific research has many applications and lessons, including everything from health and zoonotic disease to intergenerational tool use.

What will we discover next?

Dr. Goodall's observation in the fall of 1960 that chimpanzees make and use tools and her overall research on wild chimpanzees in Gombe, Tanzania shook the foundations of the scientific world and changed our understanding of non-human animals and ourselves forever. From the 1960s to today, research in Gombe has continued and evolved, producing invaluable scientific information, including some of the most important insights in modern history.

"Chimpanzees have blurred the line that once existed between 'man' and 'beast.' The chimpanzees taught us that, after all, we humans aren't as unique, compared to the rest of the animal kingdom, as we used to think."

DR. JANE GOODALL, DBE | Founder, Jane Goodall Institute, UN Messenger of Peace

Gombe by the Numbers



165,000+

hours of chimpanzee observation

200+

researchers and field assistants who have conducted research in Gombe

300+

peer reviewed journal publications, and over 500 reader articles on research from Gombe

Gombe's Impact Around The World

One of Dr. Goodall's greatest contributions is her role as a creator of and mentor at Gombe Stream Research Center. This hub and Gombe itself have contributed to generations of scientists, including many local Tanzanians as well as others from all around the globe.



Mother-Infant Studies Remain a Thriving Field of Inquiry

In many ways, the social ranking of a chimpanzee is determined by their upbringing. Young chimpanzees who are raised by more supportive and attentive mothers tend to be more successful as adults: males attain a higher social rank, and females are better mothers themselves. Infant development and the relations between the growing child and their mother and siblings were of interest to Dr. Goodall from her early research, and it remains a thriving field of inquiry led by Gombe scientists. Most famously, Jane was able to study the parenting of Flo and infant Flint from birth to young adulthood in parallel with her own child's development.



"B" Record Date Fuels Research

Using Dr. Goodall's unique and innovative observational approach, researchers in Gombe follow selected chimpanzees daily, 365 days a year. These "focal follows," as they are known, have been in operation since Dr. Goodall was able to study chimpanzees in the 1960s. Researchers today record the group's composition, foods eaten, and interactions between the focal individual and others. This data fuels Gombe's research archives, which provide a longitudinal analysis.



One Health: a Disease Prevention System

Because chimpanzees are so genetically like humans, disease is a significant threat. Even small disease outbreaks or single deaths can disproportionately impact the viability of small or isolated populations, making it imperative to guard against disease. For decades, Gombe researchers and colleagues have worked to understand the relationship between the health of humans, wildlife, and ecosystems. Observing and recording symptoms shown by chimpanzees with regular health sheet surveys, along with non-invasive primate feces sampling and results of postmortem analysis, this team has created a robust system for detecting disease transmission and preventing outbreaks. The Gombe One Health Hub, launched in 2020, builds on and utilizes 65 years of continuous chimpanzee data, almost 30 years of conservation efforts, nearly 20 years of standardized health data, high-resolution satellite imagery from Planet and Maxar, innovative non-invasive methods in Azure, and disease risk maps and dashboards — all on a powerful Esri ArcGIS platform.